

Short Summary

In the Article, *The Urban Order: an introduction to cities, culture, and power*, the author begins by exploring the five recurring elements of urban form. The first of these five recurring elements are the way in which cities are “organized on organic lines“. This concept refers not only to the basic structure and layout of a variety of different types of establishments that would fall within the order of urban, but also the function of such organizational practices that inevitably led to the success or demise of an urban environment.

The second is the concept of the “grid”, an easily applied organizational layout that separates and creates order and functionality from chaos. The usage of this structural guideline is noted as common in the new world, and is credited as to adding ease to the planning aspect in which developers could document and utilize specific locations. Personally, I have noticed the usage of the grid as being quite easy in the United States Midwest, specifically the layout of the Western Reserve in contrast with the chaos and disorganization of its New England predecessor.

The third recurring element is the “diagram, which has been utilized to impose a clearly defined hierarchy that is poised to establish order and discipline within the compounds of an urban establishment. This element is described as military geometry, as to imply social control through the calculated design of its structure. For example. The concept of space, power, and location are examined. The low level cubicle worker seeks to personalize their area with individualist items that separate their small space from

others. The CEO is given the biggest office on the highest floor, with a barriers to entry like a secretary, availability, or larger set of doors. As executive power diminishes, so does the amount of space allotted for each person as well as the “sacred” nature of the environment, Which creates a top down hierarchy that is purposefully structural in design.

The fourth element is the “visual fluency and luxury of building materials” that are used in the construction of the more sacred aspects of an urban landscape like government, religious, or memorial structures. These structures define what a society deems as important, authoritarian, or to be worshipped. The more ornate or rare the materials used in the construction of these buildings the more value its subject matter holds to the society in which they reside.

The fifth and final element that has been observed is the “skyline”, which generally refers to the cohesive nature of the structures within an urban landscape that lends its visual aesthetic to the identity of a city. In small towns the tallest structure is usually the steeple of a church. This practice implies that the residents of this town put the values of religion above all else. This element is echoed in the spires of giant cathedrals, while on the other hand massive skyscrapers that house financial institutions that reach across international borders to obtain wealth by practicing capitalism speak volumes as to what forces and values are held sacred to the residents of the surrounding communities. The same concept goes for institutions that are designed with the sole purpose of the regulation of international powers like the modernist looking United Nations buildings. Regardless of the elements of height or the new architectural design that ushers in a concept with its visual presence, the effect is essentially the same;

speaking with symbols and nonverbal communication.